

HIGH FIVE CLUB

changing lives, £5 at a time

Youth Sheep Rearing Project, Gambia



The Gambia is Africa's smallest country. It stretches 300 miles inland along the River Gambia which has an abundance of birdlife and a variety of wildlife. The communities living in rural villages along the river face extreme poverty. One such community, championed by retired Headmaster Momodou Joof, has set up a self-help group called **Future Farmers of the Gambia (FFG)**, with the aim of training young people in their community to work the land adjoining their villages and become self-sufficient.

To improve the standard of living of local villagers, FFG has developed a range of projects structured to create self-employment, to assure food self-sufficiency and security and to, over time, increase wealth, reduce malnutrition and promote health and education.

FFG's current activities are in the North Bank region of the Gambia at Njongon village, and in the West Coast region at Bafuloto village. Activities include vegetable production, local poultry rearing, beekeeping, running a local bakery and animal husbandry training.

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High Five Club Support

We were approached by FFG to help them establish a sheep rearing project in the community. Sheep production is not only complimentary to FFG's other activities, but sheep handling and husbandry is well within the capabilities of women and children in the community.

Sheep rearing not only has the potential to improve livelihoods of the rural poor, but it also has a social role, the most obvious being providing sheep for religious ceremonies, dowry settlements, receiving visitors and parents and when a festive meal is being prepared.

Above all, sheep has a commercial value, and the meat is much appreciated, easily marketable and allows the peasant farmer to meet unexpected expenditure quickly.

High Five Club members have provided £547 to FFG to kick-start their sheep rearing project through the purchase of 10 ewes and 1 ram of the local Djallonke variety. The community has provided the £76 needed for medicines, anti-parasitic drugs and vaccines. Local feed and any building materials needed for shelter will be the responsibility of the individual beneficiaries of these sheep.

Ten youth members have been selected to be the initial beneficiaries. As each ewe is mated and gives birth, the first female born to each ewe will be given to a new beneficiary in the community. In this way each beneficiary 'passes on the gift' of one ewe to another community member, with the remaining births owned by the farmer to sustain their own business. In this way families and individuals who have received a sheep become a donor themselves. This spirit of goodwill ripples through the community as animals are passed on and bonds are formed in a group effort to better their own lives.



FFG will work with the Department of Livestock to provide training to the youth in how to care for and breed their sheep, along with equipping them with business skills to promote farmer enterprise management.

The ultimate goal is to create self-employment opportunities for the village youths, to enable school drop outs to acquire the trade/skills to be self-employed, income generation and poverty reduction, and to provide startup capital of a farm animal (a no-interest living loan) to community members. A wonderful project!

For further information contact Dr Cheryl Mvula on Cheryl@highfiveclub.co.uk